

## **Postcolonial republicanism and the revival of a paradigm**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Why did republicanism enjoy renewed interest in the sixties and seventies and a ‘revival’ in the history of Western political thought?<sup>1</sup> Over the twentieth-century there was a proliferation of independent states, many of which threw off the yoke of colonial imperialism and conceptualized themselves as independent sovereign republics. Yet the main thrust of the study of republicanism has focused on how the classical Greek and Roman republican paradigm centered on virtue, citizenship and self-government developed in the history of Western political theory to culminate in the foundations of the American and French republics. As such the historical excavation and revival of the republican paradigm elides twentieth-century postcolonial republican foundations. I am curious to know why. Is this a conceptual silence or oversight? Or is something else going on? For instance, do the postcolonial creations of the Indian republic, say, break with the virtue-based reiteration of the Aristotelian and neo-roman concepts to such an extent that they ought to be considered apart? Or do these twentieth-century foundations transform the tradition into something new?<sup>2</sup>

There are several reasons as to why the recent study of republicanism has focused on the history of Western political thought. First, the mainstream view depicts republicanism as a discursive tradition centered on virtue that was challenged and eclipsed by western liberal discourses constructed around the idea of rights.<sup>3</sup> Second, examination of western republicanism reflects the intrinsic interest of the historian of political thought as well as her formation. Third, many anti-colonial

movements and creations of nation-states tend to be read in terms of nationalism and Marxism. In this context, the application of the term ‘republic’ became a ubiquitous, generic and empty signifier; and postcolonial republics were seen to lack the moral character and depth of western republics. Finally, there was a reclaiming of the republican tradition and practice as western.

Recent republican historiography stops short at the nineteenth-century when liberalism purportedly eclipsed republicanism. As such, this writing of history elides significant revolutions and republican foundings that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the radical Haitian Revolution (1801) that emancipated slaves and made them citizens<sup>4</sup> and the non-violent Indian revolution and republican founding (1947). This exclusion of postcolonial republican foundings from the historiography of republicanism perpetuates the division between the West and non-West.<sup>5</sup>

Although the post-apartheid republic of South Africa (1994) was founded after this republican revival in the history of political thought, the anti-apartheid movement that led to it coincided with this revival. The South African case, then, also presents an instance of how the decolonizing republic is elided in scholarly and theoretical discussions of republicanism. Lawrence Hamilton’s in-depth theoretical and prescriptive study of the South African republic and how it might be reformed to create real effective freedom, or freedom as power as he terms it, demonstrates the limits and short-comings of mainstream republican theory in the realization of these goals.<sup>6</sup> To Hamilton, if we want to actualize real and effective freedom associated with living in a state in which citizens have the power to determine who governs and how they govern then we must start decolonizing the republic and create institutions that not only are responsive to the vital needs of citizens, to the problems of racial and

sexual discrimination but also that give effective voice to citizens formally and institutionally. There is much merit in his work and argument and I see this as following in a long trajectory of the transformation and amelioration of republican ideals through the founding of postcolonial republics in the last century that initially conceptualized themselves as egalitarian, inclusive of gender, race and class in the citizen body and as non-aggressive and equal states in a new global order. I will develop these ideas in greater detail below, but first I would like to address the question that animates this research. Why did the republican revival of the mid-twentieth-century elide the republican foundations that followed decolonization?

Key republican theorists such as Hannah Arendt, J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner focus on European and Atlantic articulations of republicanism. Arendt considers revolutions apart from the American and French as illegitimate because they did not found proper republics and institutions in which active citizens deliberated with others, controlled the flow of events and history and imposed their agency on politics.<sup>7</sup> Rather they were republics in name, not substance. Pocock differentiates republicanism from liberalism in terms of discourse. It follows from this line of reasoning that since the language of liberalism superseded that of republicanism, republics founded in the processes of decolonization were imbibed in languages of rights as opposed to virtue. Yet anti-colonial language and state foundations promoted self-government and the sacrifice of private interests for the public good and the creation of new, participatory and free republics.

In effect, two discursive narratives are recounted: that of western republics steeped in classical Graeco-Roman tradition and that of postcolonial republics steeped in local histories and the language of anti-colonial resistance. Both narratives are about a republican paradigm that asserts human agency, moral personality and virtue

to rule over inchoate circumstance and change understood in terms of history, politics and fortune. One is told from the perspective of a western history that imposes its agency, civilization and virtue both within republics as well as over colonies understood as undeveloped or corrupt societies. The other is told from the perspective of the colonized who reclaim their virtue and agency to overcome their subjugation and to shake off the yoke of imperialism. Mainstream Anglo-American theorists and historians of republicanism do not read these narratives on the same plane or as part of the same historiography perhaps because one narrates a story of colonial empire and the other seeks to reclaim its history against the colonial power and as an equal independent republic. One promotes an expansive republic that seeks to dominate and the other an emancipatory republic that aims to overthrow foreign domination. As such these two histories are in tension with one another.

Both western and postcolonial conceptions of republicanism invoke a virtue versus fortune paradigm in the effort to obtain power and to effect change. These histories are told from two different perspectives: that of the colonizer and of the colonized. Arendt's agent/history and Pocock's virtue/fortune paradigms that underpin republicanism are about knowing when to seize power (revolution) and how to use it in order to dominate over fortune, unruly circumstance and to rule accordingly (freedom). Pocock draws this paradigm out of Machiavelli who, at the beginning of the sixteenth-century, advocated an expansive republic. At this moment, European powers were beginning to establish colonial empires abroad and to Machiavelli the virtue/fortune paradigm referred both to the founding of states and the construction of expansive republics. It is ironic that Pocock reiterates this paradigm that stood at the end of this cycle as European colonial empires were dismantled and twentieth-century republics forged through the processes of decolonization repudiated

European imperialism. To this extent these two historiographies are intimately related yet opposed and this is no doubt why decolonized republics are not included in the republican revival of the late twentieth-century.

#### THE REPUBLICAN PARADIGM: VIRTUE/FORTUNE

In *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Pocock recounts a story of the classical, Florentine and Atlantic republican tradition in terms of a linguistic paradigm of virtue that is reasserted at moments of crisis, when the republic's existence is threatened. Pocock's work is about time and he presents an historicist understanding of republicanism. He qualifies these reiterative moments as Machiavellian to refer both to Machiavelli's use of the *virtù-fortuna* paradigmatic struggle and the subversive and revolutionary ways of thinking that Machiavelli symbolizes.<sup>8</sup>

Pocock contends that in moments of crisis and change, the classical republic confronts its limits. To survive, it reasserts the universal value of virtue that posits all citizens contribute to ruling and being ruled according to the good of all, that is to say the predominant political ideology that holds sway over society. In this manner, citizens assert their moral personality. In addition, the exercise of virtue refers to the mastery and domination of the circumstances that provoke crisis depicted in terms of corruption, fortune or commerce. These symbolize self-interest, change and the confrontation or engagement with the external world, respectively. Each destabilizes the citizen's virtue and commitment to the public good including the sacrifice of one's private interests. To Pocock, when a republic is confronted by one or a combination of these elements, the only way for it to maintain itself is to reassert its virtue, its universality as a community in which all are engaged in the pursuit of the universal

good of the whole. This is captured in the language of virtue confronting fortune.<sup>9</sup>

As a body in which all citizens share in ruling, the republic opposes the tyrannical rule of an oppressive prince or a foreign imperialist. Pocock locates the moment that the classical republic reasserts its universal values of moral personality (virtue) over change and the flow of events (fortune and time) in Machiavelli's thought.

Machiavelli stood at a moment of great change in conceptualizations of both the world and time. He wrote the *Prince* around 1513 shortly after Columbus sailed to the West Indies and da Gama sailed around the horn of Africa.

In the *Prince*, Machiavelli's deployment of the *virtù/fortuna* paradigm refers to both sexual and political domination in its male-female metaphor.<sup>10</sup> The prince is portrayed to be manly and virile and to use his strategic political and military skills to dominate over the female goddess, *fortuna* who represents the uncontrollable, irrational, contingent and unknown, essentially the movement of time and change.

The metaphor is taken to refer to the prince's ability to create and maintain a state against the vagaries of fortune that could destabilize and overthrow his power.

Pocock considers the metaphor in terms of the republic and takes this to be the reiteration of Aristotle's classical republican paradigm in which citizens cultivate virtue to maintain the good; in the Machiavellian context citizens trained in military virtue defend and maintain the republic and its values. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli promotes an expansive republic based on the Roman republic that was highly successful in achieving glory and empire. Were we to read Machiavelli's ideas in the context of the moment when he wrote, when the world was transformed as Europe came into contact with the new world and as Spain and Portugal began empire-building abroad,<sup>11</sup> the *virtù-fortuna* paradigm comes across in another light. It no longer simply reflects the historicist reiteration of the benevolent Aristotelian

paradigm in crisis. But rather the paradigm could be read as a strategy to control unknown, contingent forces and the necessity to dominate over change. Moreover, in Machiavelli's day, much of Italy was subject to foreign domination. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli calls for a leader to liberate Italy from its desperate, scattered, beaten, lacerated and despoiled position to redeem its greatness; whereas, in *The Discourses*, he argues that virtue, rather than fortune led to Rome's grandeur and allowed Rome to expand and create an empire.<sup>12</sup> Although virtue serves to liberate, it is also man's skill to acquire power, to achieve glory and to dominate and rule over matter, including land, people, nature and unexpected circumstance.

Ashis Nandy's work on the psychology of colonialism presents a striking parallel between the virtue/fortune metaphor and the colonizer/colonized relation of power and subjugation that he sees as "rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness".<sup>13</sup> The political domination of colonizer over colonized is similar to sexual domination and echoes the *virtù/fortuna* male-female metaphor in which the masculine virtue dominates over the feminine fortune by rendering her weak and ineffective. To Nandy, this homology

was not an accidental by-product of colonial history. It had its correlates in other situations of oppression..... The homology ... beautifully legitimized Europe's post-medieval models of dominance, exploitation and cruelty as natural and valid. Colonialism, too, was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes and the philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which the political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity.<sup>14</sup>

Nandy captures the notion that an external power often portrays the colonized mass as an uncontrollable force that needs to be weakened and emasculated to be harnessed. This reflects Machiavelli's maxim that empires are acquired through virtue, not chance and his view that the dominated are lacerated, beaten and despoiled. This paradigm of power in which the skilled and powerful ruler emasculates and dominates over the ruled is played out in relations of gender, slavery, colonialism, social class and race. For instance, South African apartheid required this sort of social imaginary to maintain the rule of a minority over a majority.<sup>15</sup> This framework of dominatory relations within the republic applies as well to the domination of territories and peoples outside of the republic. To Machiavelli, the republic is a political form that both controls circumstance and internal politics and exerts domination externally over colonies. At the same time, this relation can be reversed. The active citizen can acquire the mantle of power against political domination; yet, once in a ruler, the citizen imposes power to control the forces of fortune and the external world.<sup>16</sup>

Pocock's use of Machiavelli's virtue/fortune metaphor as the defining element of republicanism is revealing. He juxtaposes two congruent moments. The sixteenth-century moment, when expansion forces the European state to reform itself to dominate the external world; and the twentieth-century moment, when the colonized redefine themselves to become self-determining and to oppose imperialist domination. In this later moment, European states had to reconceptualize themselves as they relinquished empire and confronted the limits of their existence. The western republic's assertion of the universality of virtue and moral personality reflects the desire to maintain a semblance of power as a political structure that cannot be emulated by former colonies. Hence republicanism as a political ideology of the *vita activa* is reclaimed as western with a genealogy extending to ancient Greece.



Pocock's Machiavellian *virtù-fortuna* paradigm parallels Arendt's understanding of history as a moment of major change, when a new era begins as revolutionary forces overthrow old structures and forms of rule. Arendt does not draw on the metaphor of male domination over women. She uses the language of political actors and history and is concerned with creating a stable republic through which men could control events, politics, history and exercise their freedom. To Arendt, the metaphor is expressed in terms of free agency and history during revolutionary moments when active agents throw off the yoke of domination, attempt to control the flow of events and master their destiny through the creation of a republic. Without constitutional structures that would allow individuals to assert their agency and exercise their freedom, they would be swept away by the forces of history and lose their agency to direct politics.<sup>17</sup>

To Nandy, the metaphor is expressed in terms of the colonizer dominating over the colonized. Once the colonized reclaim their agency, they bring about revolution and exercise freedom. In revolutionary and anti-colonial instances, the metaphor is subverted and reasserted. To Arendt, this does not always happen. Anti-colonial revolutionary forces seek freedom but do not know how to institute freedom once it has been acquired. These forces collapse into an inchoate mass of people controlled by history. Often the people are in need and according to Arendt their necessity guides their actions to follow the flow of events and to lack the foresight to establish a new order. They are vulnerable and liable to be subjugated once again by a tyrannical power. Arendt considered twentieth-century revolutions disastrous since they failed to establish a new order. They did not establish republics that stand outside the cycle of never-ending change, domination and subjection; rather they descended into terror, chaos and license.<sup>18</sup> Yet postcolonial republics (such as India)

were able to resist domination, to reclaim their freedom and self-mastery. The two histories of imperial domination and anti-colonial resistance are in tension and this may be why the story of the European republic does not go beyond the eighteenth-century. From the western perspective, these are distinct and incongruent histories. From the postcolonial viewpoint, these histories are intertwined and the founding of a republic asserts an equal sovereignty and status but challenges the political dominance of the West.

## WESTERN INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

A key reason as to why republicanism had been neglected in Anglo-American understandings of the history of political thought is that American scholarship in the sixties was preoccupied by fierce debate between proponents of the liberal consensus and post-progressive materialist historians. The former claimed that American constitutionalism was rooted in Lockean liberalism and that there was a consensus on the liberal ideology.<sup>19</sup> The latter group of historians contested this consensus and defended leftist ideals. The result was intellectual deadlock. Nevertheless, leftist historians lost credibility due to the Cold War, McCarthyism and fear of communist revolution. The language of republicanism emerged out of this deadlock and presented another way to conceptualize politics.<sup>20</sup> American historians uncovered the republican roots of America's constitutional founding.<sup>21</sup> Bernard Bailyn reconstructed the debates of revolutionary pamphleteers who advocated balanced constitutional government, freedom, virtue and reason and Gordon Wood located the ideological origins of the American republic in the notion of virtue and the "sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole".<sup>22</sup> These republican

principles contrasted with the liberal individualism and commercialism of Locke as well as with post-progressive materialist discourse.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, Arendt revitalized a theory of republicanism that focused on the active participation of all citizens in shaping their political lives. In her work on revolution of the early sixties, she asked why the creation of the American republic did not hold the same place as French revolution and republican founding in the contemporary political imagination.<sup>24</sup> She argued that new republics which arose through often revolutionary processes of decolonization were not ‘true’ republics since they did not culminate in establishing freedom and a constitutional government. Rather than consider the foundings of these newly decolonized states as republican these were looked at through the lens of nationalism and political violence. Arendt’s understanding of republicanism and its classical grounding argument greatly influenced Pocock. Notably her argument that the imposition of human agency on the flow of history could result in freedom if this activity aimed at the common good is reiterated in his conceptualization of moral personality and virtue over fortune and change.

As part of the Cambridge School of Historians, Pocock’s work resonated with Quentin Skinner. Both were concerned with methodology and how to approach the study of ideas in history. Pocock advocated an historicist approach and examined the rearticulation of paradigmatic ideas at critical moments. Skinner provided the tools with which we could study ideas in their intellectual contexts, in the time and place they were written and within the particular debates they addressed and were couched.<sup>25</sup> Both historians focused on language and speech acts. They examined what languages were available, what words a thinker chose to articulate her/his thought and how these operated in discursive fields, linguistic paradigms, ideologies,

historical and intellectual contexts.<sup>26</sup> Both criticized the ahistorical and philosophical approach of historians of political thought who read a ‘modern’ history of liberalism and rights discourse back into the history of Western political ideas.<sup>27</sup> These methodologies provided historians the tools to revive the neglected republican paradigm. Simultaneously, the postcolonial moment in which this republican paradigm was excavated abounded with republican rhetoric. Calls to participate and take control of politics for the good of all, to contest the politics of the powers that be and to push boundaries to include more people in the political were in full swing, notably in the American Civil Rights and the South African Anti-Apartheid Movements. Yet this political activism and civic spiritedness were not included in the reconstruction of republicanism.<sup>28</sup>

Context, time, space, memory and silence are relevant to how we choose to construct and narrate our understandings of the world. Even though a scholar’s intellectual interests may focus solely on a particular history or idea, the scholar ought to be aware of its articulations outside the parameters of her/his study especially if these are current. For our positionality shapes how we view the world and equally the events of the world inform how we read and formulate ideas.<sup>29</sup>

## POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND THE LIVING REPUBLIC

Sixties and seventies civil rights, anti-war, and anti-establishment movements were influenced by anti-colonial discourse and activism from abroad. These movements brought democratic, cultural and social change across the West and shaped much of post-structural and post-modern thinking.<sup>30</sup> According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, “[a]nticolonial discourse (Fanon, Gandhi et. al.) traveled back to the West at the same time as civil-liberties movements and anti-war demonstrations broke

out, alongside movements of indigenous peoples and immigrant groups for cultural sovereignty and recognition.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, within western universities, post-structuralist and post-modernist debates questioned “the canonical texts that had represented the nation or the West”.<sup>32</sup> These discussions occurred in tandem with the questioning of the centralization of Locke in the canon and the assertion that western thinkers may be read as republicans. It is informative to read the republican vogue in these broader contexts, which, at some level, must have informed the revival of the republican paradigm.

Moreover these movements gained momentum across borders in the US, England, Europe and South Africa with calls for racial and gender equality, an end to segregation and apartheid. Debate about freedom of movement, political representation, identity, who governs and how, as well as how to effect political transformation informed this moment. Hamilton’s work on representation and his critique of contemporary republican theorists who claim that the history of western political thought promotes a free state, the freedom from domination and the participation in a public spirit is important. He demonstrates that these ideas conceived within classical western republican frameworks are inadequate to address the complex modern world in which we live where people are part of various groups and are not simply represented as being a part of a single consensual ‘common good’.<sup>33</sup> Hamilton emphasizes that the goals of many anti-colonial struggles were not about “being ‘free from impediment’ or living in a free state”. These struggles “had more concrete political, economic and social goals: being free to determine who rules and how they rule; to produce, exchange and consume wherever and whenever; to love, procreate, entertain oneself and others, bring up one’s children ... and to do so in conditions free of poverty and racial and gender discrimination and domination.”

Standing on the shoulders of great political leaders (Nyerere, Fanon and Mandela), Hamilton remarks that achieving “political freedom alone does not secure these”.<sup>34</sup> The substance of the anti-colonial and freedom struggles went deeper than the simple republican call for political freedom. Neither were these attempts to found new republics empty signifiers nor simply about the creation of a free state. At stake were deeper questions about political rule, representation, social and economic goals, as noted above.

Equally events across the world from processes of decolonization to the gathering of newly independent African and Asian states at the 1955 Bandung Conference may have impacted republican historiography. The Bandung Conference sought to articulate a new voice in the new international order. Twenty-nine newly found states participated in the conference. They shared an “anti-imperial ethic” and aimed at sustaining “a sense of Asian-African affinity”.<sup>35</sup> Many anti-colonial leaders were inspired by the American and French republican foundings. The connection between the American Revolution and anti-colonial revolutions formed part of the postcolonial imagination and Sukarno commemorated the beginning of the American Revolution in his opening speech.<sup>36</sup> New African and Asian states (excepting South Africa at this time) were not considered equals by their western counterparts. They were seen as nation-states that distribute rights to a by and large passive citizenry who do not have the requisite level of education or autonomy to engage in ruling or to cultivate a meaningful sense of public-spiritedness.

## THE INDIAN REPUBLIC

India presents an example of a recent republican founding at a crucial juncture in world history at the end of World War II. During India’s long struggle for

independence, Jawaharlal Nehru looked to the American and French revolutions for inspiration. He considered the creation of the Indian republic to be part of a history of great republican foundings extending from ancient Roman, to the Dutch, British, American and French to those of his day, the Spanish, Irish, Chinese, Turkish and Syrian. Nehru sought not only to create a bridge between European and Indian history, but also to develop a wider world history.<sup>37</sup> He envisioned India as a sovereign democratic republic that would have an equal place in the world as other sovereign republics.<sup>38</sup> He believed that India and China would take their rightful places as major civilizational powers within the world. Whilst in prison, Nehru composed many works in which he conceptualized the creation of a stable democratic, socialist/egalitarian and republican state.

Nehru drew on a vast array of ideas, experience and practices from all corners of the globe in the development of his vision of a self-governing state. In shaping his political vision both Enlightenment ideals and Indian philosophy played a decisive role. He drew on Enlightenment intellectual history and ideas that shaped the ideals of Western republican self-determination as well as the ideals of the Indian struggle for self-rule (*swaraj*) based on principles of truth (*satyagraha*) and effected through non-violent protest (*ahimsa*) as well as the sacrifice of private interests for the end of independence.<sup>39</sup> Nehru transformed the western republican ideal based on the notion of *res publica*, the public thing to reflect a more contemporary egalitarian, inclusive and just society. The Indian struggle combined the languages of *res publica* and *swaraj*. The first is concerned mainly with the mixed constitution, and, the second, with rule of both the self and the political association. In my view, the combination of these two languages captures, better than pre-nineteenth western republican theory and experience, the idea that republicanism means the self-rule of all adult individuals

incorporated as equal citizens. We find this principle in Arendt, Pocock and mainly Skinner, who clearly associates republicanism with self-rule: that individuals can be free only in an egalitarian and participatory self-governing republic. This ideal was reconceptualized in nineteenth and twentieth-century movements for independence and universal egalitarian suffrage. The republican mixed constitution incorporated citizens into the public realm on a hierarchical basis, according to class; whereas the Indian republic promoted the ideal of self-rule and incorporated adult men and women on an equal basis. These languages and experiences combined to produce our contemporary understanding of republicanism.

In *Glimpses of World History*, Nehru cautiously applauds the democratic gains acquired through American and French revolutions and underlines that these ideals have not been fully obtained:

But meanwhile the new ideas of democracy were spreading, and the American and French Revolutions gave them tremendous popularity and advertisement. The fine-sounding words and phrases of the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Rights stirred people to the depths. To the millions who were oppressed and exploited they brought a thrill and a message of deliverance. Both the declarations spoke of liberty and equality and of the right to happiness.... The proud declaration of these precious rights did not result in the people obtaining them. Even now, a century and a half after these declarations, few can be said to enjoy them. But even the declaration of these principles was extraordinary and life-giving.<sup>40</sup>



Nehru refers to the exclusion of people of colour, women and the poor in the creation of these republics. In his view, much work remains to achieve freedom and equality. He believes that India could deliver these goals.

Nehru's republicanism consisted in four core elements. First, he advocated a republic that would achieve full military, economic and political independence from imperial domination. He drew upon the American experience of founding a free and independent republic that established a political constitution and self-government. Nehru depicted this as political republicanism. Second, Nehru opposed monarchy and argued that India would have to co-opt each of its independent princely states by giving the peoples of these states the choice in how they wanted to be ruled. In the end, bringing these states into the Indian republic required much negotiation and bloodshed, but for the most part he was successful in integrating these independent principalities. He was influenced by the French revolution that terminated monarchical rule and social hierarchy. He called this social republicanism that entailed the creation of new social relations between individuals mediated by laws rather than relations of dependence and hierarchy. This could be achieved through the creation of a constitutional sovereign state by contract through a Constituent Assembly. Third, Nehru called for a popularly sanctioned Constituent Assembly, equal citizenship and universal adult suffrage. He aimed at unity against communalism and promoted social and gender equality. Fourth, he argued that in a postcolonial world that had shed imperial domination, equal republics ought to be non-aggressive and non-expansive. Nehru advanced cooperative relations amongst states and the creation of an international community and institutions to further the ends of peace and security. Finally, leaders of the Indian revolution adopted non-violence as the means to oust the British Raj. Although this was not the most efficient

means to achieve change, it mobilized the masses and created a new identity based on a new understanding of politics and India.<sup>41</sup>

As India was poised to create its own constitution according to the ‘Aims and Objectives Resolution’ passed by the Constituent Assembly in January 1947, Nehru declared:

We claim in this Resolution to frame a free and democratic Indian Republic. A question may be asked what relation will that Republic bear to other countries of the world? ... Today any man who can think a little will come to the conclusion that the only way to remove doubts and dangers from the world, is to unite all the nations and ask them to work together and help each other.<sup>42</sup>

India is an important case for it hailed the end of the British Empire. India stood as a model for other states that sought independence from colonial imperialism. India demonstrates that as part of a wider history of republican foundings across the world, anti-colonial revolutions and struggles for emancipation and equality were not bereft of an understanding of political institutions and structures.

The Indian republican founding was not perfect and there were disastrous consequences, notably partition of Pakistan from India, communalism and persistent gender and social inequality, especially with regard to Dalits. Nevertheless India continues to function as the world’s largest constitutional democratic republic.

India’s republican moment offers a rich array of ideas that may have informed silently the recent republican revival. The values of self-sacrifice, of putting the public good before private interests were central to the non-violent revolution that required mass participation. During this long-winded revolution men and women of all religious, social and economic backgrounds mobilized and participated in politics

through demonstrations, political parties, boycotts and passive resistance. Resistance invoked civic virtue, the cultivation of a public spirit and the willingness to participate in the public sphere

## POSTCOLONIAL REPUBLICS

The postcolonial republic emerges from processes of decolonization. I refer mainly to the Indian republic, but will also discuss Hamilton's contributions to this conception. The postcolonial republic is conceived in a world order of equal sovereign states that aim at peace and security. Postcolonial republics advocate social and gender equality, multiculturalism, and, in the case of India, a secularity that requires the republic to take principled distance from and coexist with all religions.<sup>43</sup> Postcolonial republics repudiate tyranny, the imperialism of a foreign dominator and their own imperial domination over foreign states; they seek cooperation. They advocate a particular end: the creation of a self-governing republic constructed on the basis of a constitution sanctioned by the fictitious but unanimous people and enacted through elections. Founded on anti-colonial resistance these republics reiterate the ideal of political activism and participation in movements to secure freedom and greater equality through processes of contestation and through institutions that give effective voice to the people's needs, especially those at the lower end of society.<sup>44</sup>

In his study of representation in the postcolonial South African republic, Hamilton presents a normative conception of a postcolonial republic that would further these ends through creation institution and through a robust conception of the political and economic representation of citizens. His critical approach produces not only sharp arguments to demonstrate that liberal and republican notions of negative freedom and non-domination as "the avoidance of alien interference or control" are

“politically unhelpful”. For “they rest on the unrealistic assumption that politics can somehow proceed without representation and power relations.” Rather Hamilton promotes a robust notion of freedom as power where an individual’s “freedom depends upon the power to: “overcome existing obstacles”; “determine who governs my political association”; “resist the disciplining power of my community and state”; and “determine my social and economic environment via meaningful control over my representatives”.<sup>45</sup>

Although he focuses on South Africa, his criticisms and prescriptions could be applied to republics across space and time. His critique of and debt a wide range of political thinkers is deep and comprehensive. Hamilton takes seriously the relationship between freedom and power. Of concern to this study are his criticisms of mainstream republicanism as deriving roots from antiquity and of promoting freedom as non-domination. To Hamilton their theories are ill-suited to modern times, do not address real needs and do not go far enough to counter and transform the voices of elite representatives. It is not sufficient to argue, as many republicans do that “to live in a free state is to live in a situation of non-domination”.<sup>46</sup> Rather this reduces freedom to the form of one’s state (a regime type) and does not make adequate provision for guaranteeing the freedom of ordinary people from the domination of elite representatives.

Although Philip Pettit advocates contestatory mechanisms,<sup>47</sup> Hamilton argues that these neither go far enough nor do they reconsider the relationship between political and economic representatives such that these rulers may be scrutinized and controlled to ensure that their policies secure the “enjoyments of a voluntarily chosen political life”.<sup>48</sup> Hamilton claims that real modern and effective freedom depends on representation, on the power of formal and informal representatives, and on the

citizen's "power to counter ... 'states of domination' via effective political participation and meaningful control over political representatives".<sup>49</sup> He outlines four dimensions over which citizens ought to be able to exercise and realize freedom as power: empowerment, representation, resistance and control.<sup>50</sup> Freedom he claims is "a combination of my ability to determine what I will do and my power to do it, ... to bring it about."<sup>51</sup>

He further advocates the creation of: district assemblies in which citizens would be able to debate and formulate policies according to real needs and against real issues of discrimination that would in turn be presented via a consiliar system to political representatives and eventually formalized; a tribune of the plebs for members of dominated groups and classes in society to formulate and veto legislation.<sup>52</sup> These formal and institutional mechanisms of power are intended to create real freedom and to give voice to various groups in society and in particular to those who have the least economic power. These innovations are inspired by Machiavelli's reading of Roman tribunal and popular politics as well as John McCormick's proposal to reinstate a contemporary form of the people's tribunes.<sup>53</sup> Hamilton's institutional recommendations work from the grassroots up and empower people, especially those who are marginalized through structural arrangements, or by class, race and gender.

He further considers that contemporary circumstances are highly complex and that individuals do not conceptualize themselves as part of people with a common moral vision but rather they are parts of a "series of overlapping groups" to which they are connected through various aspects of their being and identity. Their participation and contribution to political society therefore differs in contemporary times from the more ancient cohesive city-states characterized by unity in the acquiescence of the common good. Hamilton contends that "Arendt, Pettit and other

republicans romanticize” ancient history, notions of the good, “community solidarity, civic virtue and political action”. Moreover, these are “unrealistic for citizens living complex modern lives with significant degrees of everyday independence from the state and other citizens.”<sup>54</sup> In effect, he promotes a new understanding of freedom as power through which citizens are not only enabled to participate across a variety of institutions but also in which citizens must have control over who rules and how they rule. In this regard, freedom is understood as a sense of positive control over the political, economic and environmental policies. Hamilton’s prescriptive norms serve to decolonize institutional power of the post-apartheid South African republic and to decolonize the republican free state tied to notions of a single common good and freedom from domination. In effect, Hamilton redesigns republican theory to promote a postcolonial republic that takes seriously freedom, the needs of citizens and their capacity to control political and economic policy.

## CONCLUSION

The reappearance of republicanism in the latter half of the twentieth-century was not due simply to the intellectual revival of a neglected history, language and narrative. Rather republics were cropping up in the world recasting and reimagining the language and structures of politics. Many of these new republics were not merely nationalist or communist; they were constitutionally established democratic republics that saw themselves as following in a long line of modern republican foundings. To suppose that republican discourse had lapsed from the political imaginary misses the redeployment of this language and vocabulary in anti-colonial movements. The republican tradition, with roots in the ancient world, continued to evolve through postcolonial foundings in nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. These republics drew

on both Enlightenment and indigenous ideas and considered themselves part of a wider trajectory of the creation of modern states in a new world order of equal sovereign republics that repudiated the hierarchies of imperialism. The virtue versus fortune paradigm shifted as women, the colonized and subjugated reclaimed their place in the political realm and reasserted their agency against dominatory rulers in the creation and founding of modern postcolonial republics.

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<sup>1</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, second edition); hereafter cited as *MM*. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963, 1988 edition) chapter 6: “The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure”, 215-281; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, two volumes. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘From civilization to globalization: The ‘west’ as a shifting signifier in Indian modernity,’ *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 13:1 (2012), 138-152; Jun Heyck Kwak and Leigh Jenco (eds.) *Republicanism in North East Asia: Political Theories in East Asian Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Virtue, rights, and manners: A model for historians of political thought,’ in J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37-50, 38-39; Quentin Skinner, ‘The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty,’ in eds. G. Bock, Q. Skinner, and M. Viroli, *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 293-309; 300-301, 306-307; Pocock, *MM*, 505-513, 550-552. Pocock follows Arendt’s argument that nineteenth-century revolutionary thought and twentieth-century revolutions failed to remember the American Revolution, *Revolution*, 215-218.

<sup>4</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Silence and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); S. Buck-Morss, ‘Hegel and Haiti’ *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26: No. 4 (Summer, 2000), 821-865.

<sup>5</sup> Pocock, *MM*; Arendt, *Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963, 1988 edition); Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, Two volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joel Isaac, 'Republicanism: A European Inheritance?' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 8:1 73-86, 74-80.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Hamilton, *Freedom is Power: Liberty through Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963, 1988 edition), 215-223; Arendt, 'Revolution and Public Happiness,' *Commentary* (Nov. 1960), 413-422.

<sup>8</sup> Pocock, *MM*, vii-viii, 3-5, 554.

<sup>9</sup> Pocock, *MM*, vii-viii, 3-5.

<sup>10</sup> Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolo Machiavelli* (London: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in Bram Gieben and Stuart Hall (eds.), *The Formations of Modernity: Understanding Modern Societies An Introduction Book I* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 185-222, 189-194.

<sup>12</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (eds.) R. Price and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chapter 26; Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, (ed.) L. J. Walker (London: Penguin Books, 1983), II, 1-2; M. Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1983, 12<sup>th</sup> impression, 1998), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, 4; Franz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, transl. C. Markmann (London: Pluto Oress, 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Hamilton, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-64.

<sup>17</sup> Arendt, *Revolution*, 52-60.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-60.

<sup>19</sup> Kramnick, 35; Rafael Major, 'The Cambridge School and Leo Strauss: Texts and Context of American Political Science,' *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 58: No. 3 (September 2005), 477-485.



<sup>20</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, 'Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,' *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (June 1992), 11-38, 11-20; Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, *From Liberalism to Social Democracy: Liberal Beginnings: Making a Republic for Moderns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Richard Ashcraft, 'One Step Backwards, Two Steps Forward,' in (ed.) John S. Nelson, *What Should Political Theory be Now?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 515-544, 515-523.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of American Republicanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971, fifth printing) 45, 63-76, 83, 92-93, 282-283.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998, with new preface), 53-54.

<sup>23</sup> Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 7, 35-40; J.G.A. Pocock, 'Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the Ideologia Americana,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April-June 1987), 325-346, 338-339; Pocock, 'America's Foundations, Foundationalisms, and Fundamentalisms', *Orbis* (Winter 2005), 53-60.

<sup>24</sup> Arendt observes: 'the theoretical concern and conceptual thought lavished upon the French Revolution by Europe's thinkers and philosophers' has 'contributed decisively to its world-wide success' *Revolution*, 220.

<sup>25</sup> Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 29-67; Pocock, 'Languages and their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought,' in J.G.A. Pocock (ed.), *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 3-41.

<sup>26</sup> Pocock, 'Languages and their Implications', 38; Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation,' in Jessica Evans, et. al. (eds.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 2013, second edition), 1-47; Skinner, "'Social meaning' and the explanation of social action,' in *Meaning and Context*, 79-96.

<sup>27</sup> Skinner, "'Social meaning'"; J.G.A. Pocock, 'Virtues, rights and manners,' 37-50.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, Two volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joel Isaac, 'Republicanism: A European

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Inheritance? *European Journal of Social Theory*, 8:1, 73-86, 74-80; Biancamaria Fontana (ed.), *The Invention of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.)

*Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313.

<sup>30</sup> Pal Ahluwalia, 'Out of Africa: post-structuralism's colonial roots' *Postcolonial Studies*, 8:2 (2005), 137-154.

<sup>31</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture,' in Christopher Lee (ed.), *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 45-68, 58; Donna Murch, 'The Campus and the Street: Race, Migration, and the Origins of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA,' *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 9:4 (2007), 333-345.

<sup>32</sup> Chakrabarty, 'Legacies' 58.

<sup>33</sup> Hamilton, p. 129.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

<sup>35</sup> Chakrabarty, 47-48.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>37</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History: Being Further Letters to his Daughter, Written in Prison, and Containing a Rambling Account of history for Young People* (London: Penguin, 2004); Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, (London: Meridian Books, 1951).

<sup>38</sup> Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings), Vol. I, 22 Jan. 1947 online at <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/vol1p5.htm> last accessed 21/9/10.

<sup>39</sup> Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), ix-48.

<sup>40</sup> Nehru, *Glimpses*, 612.

<sup>41</sup> Nehru, *Glimpses*, 827-854.

<sup>42</sup> Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings), Vol. I, 22 Jan. 1947 online at <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/vol1p5.htm> last accessed 21/9/10.

<sup>43</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, 'India's Model: Faith, secularism and democracy,' *Open Democracy.net*, 03 Nov. 2004, [https://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-multiculturalism/article\\_2204.jsp](https://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-multiculturalism/article_2204.jsp), last accessed 16 Jan. 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, 198-205.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 196-197.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> Hamilton, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-93.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 202-204.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-64.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 129.